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Pie In The Sky



The Plate

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Continuing to mix philanthropy and food, Paul Newman opened the Dressing Room in Westport, Connecticut, last fall to support a neighboring theater and local farmers. Resembling an old New England barn, it has a menu of regional American cooking harking back to another time. Following heirloom recipes and using regional ingredients, chef Michel Nischan (seated above) consistently turns out simple, satisfying dishes—like his classic oyster stew. Look for local mollusks so plump they hang over the sides of your spoon, and so rich and sublimely salty they cause you to close your eyes in near ecstasy.

—John Steinbreder

DRESSING ROOM, 27 POWERS COURT, WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT; 203-226-1114;

www.dressingroomhomegrown.com



The Cocktail

GRAND ST. CAFE in Kansas City, Missouri, may be 1,817 miles from Sausalito, California, but it has mirrored that city's casual vibe since opening 16 years ago. And the top-flight Sausalito Sunrise Martini delivers a taste of The Coast that complements its sunny appearance. Appreciate the gold and rose tones in your chilled stemware while crunching through grilled flatbread topped with creamy goat cheese, fresh tomatoes, bacon and arugula. Midwestern hospitality never tasted so good.

—Lisa Waterman Gray

GRAND ST. CAFE, 4740 GRAND AVENUE, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI;
816-561-8000; www.grandstreetcafe.com

Sausalito Sunrise Martini

[For information on Delta service to this and other great destinations, visit delta.com.](http://delta.com)

1.3 oz. Skyy Vodka
1.3 oz. Pama Pomegranate Liqueur

3 oz. fresh lime juice
A dash of fresh orange juice

Shake and serve in a glass with a sugared rim, ornamented with a citrus twist.

Order of the Day

Extra Oomph!



Captain Spongefoot (a.k.a. Paul DiBello) doesn't want to incinerate your taste buds—he'd rather you savor the spicy complexity of his award-winning wing sauces. Spongefoot-brand sauces pack their heat in the form of potent pulp from cayenne and other peppers, which makes for more flavor and less burn than their powdered-pepper-based counterparts. Of the three varieties—Original, Chipotle and Asian-inspired Z Sauce—the Original gets my vote. It's a rich red nectar of the fire gods, just the ticket to give your chicken wings extra *oomph* for football season.

—Eric Peterson

CAPTAIN SPONGEFOOT TRADING CO. WING SAUCE, 303-367-0167; www.captainspongefoot.com; \$3.85 PER 5-OUNCE BOTTLE, \$5.65 PER 12-OUNCE BOTTLE, \$10.45 FOR A HALF-GALLON, PLUS SHIPPING

Rhapsody In 'Cue

On the lot of an auto-body shop in the Bronx sits a candy-apple-red trailer that houses Mo Gridder's BBQ. The slow-cooked spareribs are hearty and juicy, while the pulled-pork sandwich is perfect for tailgating. Enjoy home-made mac-and-cheese and collard greens to the sounds of the garage. All-American BBQ at its best!

—Kevin DiStasio

CENTERBROOK, CONNECTICUT

MO GRIDDER'S WORLD FAMOUS BBQ, 565 HUNTS POINT AVENUE, BRONX, NEW YORK; 718-991-3046;
www.mogridder.com

WHERE'S THE **BEST** BARBECUE? E-mail: TrueCue@delta-sky.com

What Paul Pacult's Pouring

28 YEARS AND COUNTING

The Delicious Quote

'If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world.'

—J.R.R. TOLKIEN

Rick Sayre is a big, unpretentious man with an engaging smile and a no-nonsense handshake. Refreshingly low-key and polite, Sayre is the director of winemaking at Rodney Strong Vineyards, a benchmark, mid-sized winery in northern California's Sonoma County.

Hired in 1979 by the late Rodney Strong, Sayre has seen the still-idyllic county evolve from oenological cottage-industry status to an American powerhouse wine region with international presence. Over the past 28 years, Sayre, as much as any other Sonoma County winemaker, has come to epitomize what winemaking is about: marrying the right soil with the right topography and the right climate to the right grape. Four such "rights" in the right hands can make for stupendously enjoyable wines.

RODNEY STRONG 2004 RESERVE PINOT NOIR, JANE'S VINEYARD; RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY, CALIFORNIA (\$35)

One of the finest Russian River Valley pinot noirs ever produced by this venerable Sonoma County winery. Its crushed-velvet texture wraps around flavor pyrotechnics that ignite into starburst tastes of black cherry preserves, cocoa bean and stone/granite. Buy six bottles, drink two and lay down the rest for 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. Match it with lamb chops grilled over mesquite for a culinary explosion.

★★★★ (out of a possible five)



ROUTAS 2006 ROUVIERE ROSÉ; COTEAUX VAROIS EN PROVENCE, FRANCE (\$12)

This succulent yet leather-dry and flowery rosé is a deliriously happy marriage of grenache (40 percent), cinsault and syrah (30 percent each). The syrah provides the substance, while the other two grapes supply the pizzazz. Perfect choice for that last-of-the-summer picnic of warm corned beef on rye with thinly sliced Swiss cheese and Dijon mustard. ★★★



FESS PARKER 2005 WHITE RIESLING; SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA (\$14)

The slate/mineral quality of the bouquet is dry and fresh. Then you taste this 100 percent riesling winner and your 10,000 taste buds are enchanted by ripe flavors of pineapple, nectarine and white peach. Made-from-scratch pork, scallion and egg fried rice would taste even better served alongside this lithe, nuanced riesling gem. ★★★



FARETTI BISCOTTI FAMOSI BISCOTTI LIQUEUR; ITALY (\$29)

The biscotto is that crunchy, nutty-tasting torpedo of a cookie that's served after dinner with espresso in restaurants that feature Italian cuisine. Faretti is a biscotto in golden liquid form, and it's one of the best new liqueurs of 2007. Sweet tastes of almond paste, orange zest and cookie batter enhance post-prandial moments, Italian-inspired or not. ★★★★★



SMITH WOOD-HOUSE 10 YEAR OLD TAWNY PORT; PORTUGAL (\$28)

Few libations can sum up a multicourse meal as eloquently as authentic aged tawny port from Portugal. From the oft-neglected port lodge of Smith Woodhouse comes this devilishly luscious—and affordable—port that tastes of roasted walnuts, nougat, nutmeg, black raisins and dates. Pair it with flan for an exquisite denouement to an evening with close friends. ★★★★★



Find out what else F. Paul Pacult's pouring at www.spiritjournal.com.

5 Fab Restaurants for Solo Dining

Cure the solo dining blues with the two C's: counter and communal. A counter perch by an open kitchen offers the bonus of a live cooking show; a communal table fosters conversation—maybe even dining tips for your next meal. Here are •ve far-ranging recommendations.

(Prices reflect a three-course dinner per person, before beverages, tax and gratuity.)

ONE MARKET One Market Street, San Francisco; 415-777-5577;
www.onemarket.com; \$50

Reserve one of the coveted six seats at the rear kitchen counter, and you'll have a privileged and—especially at lunch—pampered perch for enjoying great new American cuisine. Not only can you observe and talk with the chefs, but at the midday meal you'll be served a special amuse-bouche (perhaps beet carpaccio topped with a marinated rock shrimp and crispy ginger) created solely for the counter crowd.



ONE MARKET

L'ATELIER DE JOËL ROBUCHON Four Seasons Hotel, 57 East 57th Street, New York; 212-350-6658; www.fourseasons.com/newyorkfs/dining; \$90

The 20 seats at the U-shaped pear-wood counter are the most cherished in this stunning, I.M. Pei-inspired eatery, where the cuisine soars as high as the ceiling. Don't miss the free-range caramelized quail stuffed with foie gras and served with truffled potato purée.



L'ATELIER DE JOËL ROBUCHON

FORK: ETC. 308 Market Street, Philadelphia; 215-625-9425;
www.forkrestaurant.com; \$40

Wednesdays at 8 p.m., up to 16 diners (owner Ellen Yin often among them) gather around a communal table at Fork:etc., next door to Yin's more upscale Fork restaurant. They congregate for a Philly favorite—a first-come, four-course dinner party fueled by that day's menu from chef Thien Ngo, as well as unlimited pouring of two wines paired with his inventive cuisine.

RISTORANTE LUIGINO 1100 New York Avenue NW, Washington, D.C.; 202-371-0595; www.luigino.com; \$35

It's two steps up to the 12 primo perches by the kitchen counter at this popular Northern Italian-style trattoria, known for its homemade pasta, fresh fish and individual pizzas. You can watch the latter being pulled bubbly hot from the wood-burning oven, which also roasts a killer asparagus and fontina side dish.

WEBER GRILL RESTAURANT 539 North State Street, Chicago; 312-467-9696; www.webergrillrestaurant.com; \$32

Backyard grilling goes indoors, as tong-wielding cooks flip burgers, steaks, fish, even asparagus and mushrooms on kettle grills—Weber grills, naturally. Snag one of six seats at the kitchen counter and you can bone up on your grilling techniques, from charcoal lighting with a chimney to mastering grill marks. One caution: The heat from the seven oversized grills, while welcome in winter, can be a bit much in summer.

—John Grossmann



EVENTful!

According to event planner **Tony Conway**, fall is a season of comfortable, relaxed entertaining. Nature handles the decorating with its vivid hues of apricot, coral and amber, so gather your friends around an outdoor hearth for this season's best party.

PARTY ON THE PATIO

If you have an outdoor kitchen, now is the time to put it to work. Or create the effect of one with a fire pit, such as the rustic hand-hammered copper fire pit from **Smith & Hawken** (www.smithandhawken.com, \$69–\$459). Surround it with decorative chairs and add comfortable touches such as a pile of soft blankets for stargazing. I like to fill a basket with s'mores ingredients (add more flair with Belgian chocolate bars) and place it near the fire pit, along with telescoping forks for roasting. Try the **Rolla Roaster Camping Fork** (rollaroaster.com).

TABLE TALK

Incorporate **elements of fall** into your centerpiece and table décor. Look for produce with deep hues (apples, pumpkins, artichokes) and arrange in a simple, rustic vase with some added greenery from the garden. Use complementary colors in your tableware and linens—the more natural tones, the better.

TURN UP THE HEAT

The perfect fall party needs a roaring fire—one that doesn't snap, crackle and pop. Properly seasoned firewood is key. Ronney McLarty of **Dixie Firewood** (www.dixiefirewood.com) suggests giving wood at least six months to a year to

season properly. Look for fairly lightweight firewood with darkened ends and some visible cracks or splits. "Burning green wood creates creosote," says McLarty, "and that can be damaging to your fireplace's chimney and potentially, after significant buildup, cause a fire."

For an exotic touch, try osage orange. Other top-burning hardwoods include oak, ash and walnut, and apple or maple for a woody aroma.

SAY "CHEESE"

An artfully arranged platter of artisanal cheese and charcuterie is a crowd-pleasing, fuss-free way to start the evening. **D'Artagnan** (www.dartagnan.com) is a quality purveyor of cured meats such as wafer-thin slices of wild boar prosciutto (\$29.99 for 1.5 pounds) or a dry-cured saucisson sec (\$6.99 per half-pound). For presentation, cut the saucisson sec into four sections, sprinkle with a bit of ground pepper and serve with toothpicks. (Visit PickOnUs.com for festive toothpicks.) A cheese platter will also add a rustic touch to your table. Chief Concierge Robert Watson at the Willard InterContinental Hotel in Washington, D.C., recommends paying a visit to the experts at **Cowgirl Creamery** (www.cowgirlcreamery.com, with stores in San Francisco and Washington, D.C.). "If efficiency is your goal, order the Bon Temps Party Box [\$185 plus shipping], complete with a selection of five cheeses," he suggests. "It is a nice package to get you started."



THE FIVE-CHEESE BON TEMPS PARTY BOX FROM COWGIRL CREAMERY

SALUD!

Serve **B.R. Cohn Silver Label Cabernet Sauvignon, 2005** (www.brcohn.com, \$20) for a delicious wine pairing with blue-veined cheeses. Sparkling wines and rieslings are very versatile when paired with cheese. Try a **Selbach-Oster Riesling Kabinett** (www.selbach-oster.de/sbwines, \$17) with Cowgirl Creamery's Red Hawk cheese.

SWEET ENDINGS

Warm up your guests before they leave for home with a selection of pies for dessert. Keep things looking home-made (but easy for you) with a pie sampler from the **Little Pie Company** (www.littlepiecompany.com). Each sampler contains four pies: sour cream apple walnut, Key lime, old-fashioned apple, and Mississippi mud pie (\$58, including shipping). And the most important thing to remember when you're hosting a party? Enjoy yourself!

Tony Conway owns A Legendary Event (800-775-9530, www.alegendaryevent.com, e-mail:

partyguy@legendaryevents.com), a full-service event company based in Atlanta.

edited by: david bailey. wing sauce photo by john kuczala; the plate photo by bill milne; the cocktail photo by patrick mcdonnell; wine photo courtesy of rodney strong; barbecue courtesy of mo gridder's world famous bbq; routas photo by bill lusk; one market photo courtesy of wagstaff worldwide; l'atelier de JOËL robuchon photo courtesy of four season hotel new york; event photo by jupiterimages; cheese photo by john kuczala